

**Homily for the 20th Anniversary of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration
St. Anthony Hospital Chapel, Effingham**

July 1, 2013

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: In the waters of Baptism, the Lord has called each of us to himself and given us the Holy Spirit to be sent as messengers ahead of him. When the Lord desires to send us out, what is our response? Are we quick to suggest something more pressing, something more urgent that needs immediate attention like the disciple in today's Gospel, or are we willing to simply put our hand to the plow and labor in the Lord's fields, as we heard yesterday? This sort of discipleship is certainly not easy, but it is to this manner of life that we have been called and it is this way of life – the life of faithful discipleship – that we must strive to foster within the communion of faith.

The life of discipleship could also rightly be called friendship with Jesus Christ. We know that the truest of friends can say to one another in all sincerity "I will follow you wherever you go" and mean it, without placing any conditions on their words (Matthew 8:19). They are ready at a

moment's notice to step up and lend a hand, to listen with compassion or to counsel with wisdom, to relax and have fun, to do whatever is good for the one who is a friend. This is why we read in Scripture that "faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure" (Sirach 6:14). The truest friend is the one who is willing to suffer with us and for us and for this reason we have the truest of friends, the most faithful of friends and the sturdiest of shelters, in Jesus Christ who gave himself for us and continues to be with us in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

You have come to know and to treasure his friendship so much that you seek to spend a special time with him as you come to adore him in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I am grateful for your dedication and your fidelity to this important apostolate that so often remains hidden from most people.

So it is that we come today to the altar of the Lord to celebrate and give thanks for twenty years of perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament here at St. Anthony hospital. What does it mean to adore the Lord?

So often when we come before the Lord we bring with us the many struggles and frustrations of daily life, the pain of strained relationships,

sorrow for our sins and for failures to love; in short, we often come bearing the burden of a heavy heart, a heart that loves but is also weak, one that often puts other things before the Lord.

Particularly here in this hospital, when we come to adore the Lord we bring with us those patients who are in need of healing and of comfort; the nurses who provide compassionate care and the doctors who seek to alleviate the pains of the body; the families who feel helpless. Certainly it is right for us to bring all of these concerns to the Lord and to ask his blessings upon those who may not at these difficult moments have the words to speak to him.

But we must also be careful that our time spent in adoration does not stop here; it must go deeper still. We must be sure to keep our time before the Lord about him and not about ourselves; we must remember to keep him before everything else. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once said about Eucharistic Adoration:

Let yourself be embraced by him! Gaze no longer upon your own wounds, gaze upon his. Do not look upon what still separates you from him and from others; look upon the infinite distance that he has abolished by taking your flesh, by mounting the Cross which men

had prepared for him, and by letting himself be put to death so as to show you his love. In his wounds, he takes hold of you; in his wounds, he hides you. Do not refuse his Love!"¹

We sometimes lament that it can be difficult to find new or younger recruits to take part in perpetual adoration. This, I think, is often because they do not understand what it is that takes place. We must help them understand that time spent with Jesus is never time wasted but always time used well; it is not simply time spent sitting but an experience of love. We must encourage them to meet the Lord here to allow themselves to be embraced by him.

When he spoke with a group of children a few years ago, the Pope Emeritus spoke about what we should do in Eucharistic Adoration. He said to them:

Adoration is recognizing that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus shows me the way to take, and that I will live well only if I know the road that Jesus points out and follow the path he shows me. Therefore, adoration means saying: "Jesus, I am yours. I will follow you in my life, I never want to lose this friendship, this communion with you." I could also say that adoration is essentially an embrace with Jesus in

which I say to him: "I am yours, and I ask you, please stay with me
always."²

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, September 15, 2008.

² Pope Benedict XVI, Catechetical Dialogue with Children, October 15, 2005.